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ABSTRACT

Children use simile and metaphor at an early age in both spontaneous oral language and written language. This study sought (1) to design an instrument to elicit children's spontaneous oral production of simile and metaphor, (2) to elicit such responses and examine the nature of the responses to different tasks and stimuli, (3) and to develop criteria for analysis of children's oral production of simile and metaphor. Sixty children from grades four, six, and eight were presented with stimuli that ranged from concrete to abstract representation. The children participated in five tasks based on the stimuli dealing with knowledge, association, connotation, metalinguistics, and induction. Results indicated that abstract, complex, and unfamiliar stimuli are more effective in evoking children's metaphoric oral language. Likewise, a descriptive task evoked from the children a greater quality and quantity of simile responses. Grade was not a significant factor. Although older children show superior ability over younger children in producing metaphoric language, they do not exercise this ability in spontaneous oral language. A need exists for language arts programs that stress oral metaphoric language. (MAI)

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SIMILE AND METAPHOR PRODUCTION IN CHILDREN'S ORAL LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

There is in general a lack of research which looks at children's spontaneous and oral language in terms of figurative language, especially simile and metaphor. Likewise, language texts and curriculums tend to lack consistency in their treatments of figurative language at the elementary level, and it is usually not until the upper elementary to junior high school level that simile and metaphor are treated deliberately as an important aspect of language expression. Little attention is given to the use, production, and expansion of figures of speech in children's oral and written language.

Yet children do use simile and metaphor in their spontaneous oral language at an early age, and in their written language (Sweet, 1974; Pollio and Pollio, 1974). Studies that have looked at metaphoric production in oral language situations have tended to elicit metaphoric productions by providing the subjects with incomplete, unfinished similes (Gardner et al., 1974; Holstein, 1974), or by having subjects match words with nonverbal elements (Gardner, 1974). Consequently the child has not responded with his own spontaneous similes and metaphors.

The everyday language of children and adults is surprisingly metaphorical, largely because our language does not have a discrete word for every attribute one might wish to mention. Therefore metaphor, along with other forms of figurative language, acts as a means of introducing new concepts and attributes to the user of language, and the

recipient of language, through association of words, ideas, and images already known and conceptualized by the user and recipient. For children, who have a more limited range of vocabulary and verbal symbols at their disposal than do adults, metaphorical-associational thought and language activity might well be a very important and widely resorted-to learning process in the development of language and cognition.

The Purpose of the Study.

In general terms the purposes of the study were threefold. First, to design an instrument to elicit spontaneous oral production of simile and metaphor, and metalinguistic knowledge of simile and metaphor, at grade levels 4, 6 and 8. Spontaneous oral language was defined as the production of oral language without external encouragement in the way of linguistic forms and cues (incomplete sentences, polar adjectives, modifiers, etc.), either of an oral or written nature.

Second, to elicit and examine children's oral production of simile and metaphor, firstly to determine if these features of figurative language exist in middle childhood, and then to examine the nature of responses to different tasks and stimuli, and the nature of change in usage across increasing grade levels.

Third, to develop criteria for analysis of children's oral production of simile and metaphor, and to examine both quantitative and qualitative aspects of metaphoric productions.

Questions Addressed in the Study.

These six questions focused the study, and were to be analyzed by statistical procedures.

1. Is there increased production of simile and metaphor across grade levels 4, 6 and 8?
2. Is there a qualitative difference across grade levels 4, 6 and 8 of similes and metaphors produced?
3. What effects do different tasks have on the production of similes and metaphors?
4. What effects do different stimuli have on the production of similes and metaphors?
5. For the metalinguistic tasks, is there increased production and quality of simile and metaphor across grade levels 4, 6 and 8?
6. For the metalinguistic tasks, what are the effects of different stimuli on the production of simile and metaphor?

THE STUDY

Since the study was an exploratory and descriptive one it seemed more appropriate to pose questions rather than hypotheses which could be discussed from analysis of the data. The questions were considered significant for discussion following an extensive review of the literature.

The Children Involved.

A total of 60 children were used in the study. Scores on the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests were compiled for all children in grades four, six and eight in two neighbouring elementary and junior high schools in a satellite suburban school district in [illegible]. A random selection of 20 children at each grade level, with equal numbers of boys and girls, was taken from those children whose IQ scores fell within the range 110-125.

The Tasks and Stimuli.

Tasks were designed, and stimuli chosen, which would both lead the children from a concrete to an abstract situation, and build up a foundation of descriptive, literal language from which associational and figurative tasks and language could develop.

The tasks define the genre for oral language, which are description, association and figuration. In addition to collecting the spontaneous sample, other tasks were designed to appraise the children's conscious awareness and metalinguistic knowledge of simile and metaphor.

The stimuli provided the content, referent, or main subject for children's spontaneous oral language. A pilot study was conducted to test various tasks and stimuli before final selections were made.

Tasks.

It seemed necessary to design tasks with a minimum, if any, of linguistic, syntactic, semantic or associational clues which might direct children in the production of similes and metaphors. It was up

to the individual to respond to the task, by reference to the stimulus, in his spontaneous manner.

The tasks provided cumulative experiences for the children. The knowledge-attributes task elicited denotative/criterial perceptions and observations to focus on such attributes as colour, shape, texture, weight, function, part/whole relationships, composition, location (Nixon, 1975). The association-experiential task drew associations between the stimulus and other objects/situations/experiences that the individual knows or has had.

The combined language form-figuration task expanded on the cognitive and linguistic requisites for knowledge of attributes and properties, and association of thought, prior knowledge and experience, allowing the child to frame metaphorical-associational thought in an oral language situation. The metalinguistic tasks, with and without examples, were also designed to provide a measure of children's knowledge of simile and metaphor, and of their ability to produce similes and metaphors from models.

Stimuli.

Three stimuli were used in the study; they were selected so as to range from concrete representation to abstract representation, and all involved similarity of content, namely animals. The animal theme was chosen because children at each of the grade levels studied have a wide interest in, and liking for, animals.

Stimulus A: a large, stuffed toy dog.

Of the first order of reference; it is concrete, three dimensional, and palpable.

Stimulus B: a large photograph/picture of a wild deer, in natural Fall surroundings.

Of the second order of reference; it is two-dimensional, pictorial, but being a photograph, it is referentially "real".

Stimulus C: a large art reproduction, in abstract style, of three giraffes in an abstracted setting being pondered by a small boy. The title of the painting by G. Roland Smith is Boy with Giraffes.

Of the third order of reference; it is two-dimensional, an artistic representation, but is interpretive and abstracted from the "real".

Presentation of the Tasks and Stimuli.

The first three tasks were given in order for each stimulus, beginning with Stimulus A.

Task 1: Knowledge Task. Denotative/Criterial responses.

The child was asked to describe the stimulus, pretending he is describing it to someone from outer space, who has just landed on earth, and has never seen the object or scene before.

Task 2: Association Task.

The association task was designed to change the focus of the child's thinking from the purely concrete responses required by the first task, to associative/relative thought processes which might draw on the child's past experiences.

The child was asked to give words, ideas, and thoughts which come straight into his head when he sees the stimulus appear again.

Task 3: Figurative Task. Connotative/Affective responses.

The child was asked to give a story about the stimulus. He could choose to make up a story, or pretend the animal is a personal pet. The child was advised that he might remember something he has done, seen, heard of, read, or know about from before. He is also advised that he might like to talk about how it (the stimulus) makes him feel, or how he feels about it.

Tasks 4 and 5 were presented after the first three tasks had been sequentially given for all stimuli. Tasks 4 and 5 were given with all three stimuli in front of the child.

Task 4: Metalinguistic Task.

(a) The child was asked to give similes for any one, two, or all three of the stimuli.

(b) The child was asked to give metaphors for any one, two, or all three things.

Task 5: Inductive Metalinguistic Task.

Examples of similes (a) and metaphors (b) were presented to the child on file cards. The salient features of each which made the example a simile or metaphor were discussed with the child. The child was then asked to give similes (a) or metaphors (b) for the three stimuli.

The cards were turned over before the child was asked to give his similes or metaphors.

The examples used were:

SIMILE

an oven is as hot as fire

this cloud is fluffy like whipped cream

the sun set slowly like a sinking red ball

John walked as slow as a tortoise.

METAPHOR (Grades 4 and 6)

She is bursting with joy.

Hair is spaghetti.

She has rosy cheeks.

The ship sailed lazily out of sight.

METAPHOR (Grade 8)

John is a tortoise.

The girl flew over the fence and escaped from the charging bull.

It was a happy book.

The ship sailed lazily out of sight.

The examples provided an equal number of LIKE and AS varieties of simile, and a wide variety of types of metaphor was made available by using an example of each grammatical form; ie. noun, adjective, verb and adverb, after Brooke-Rose (1958).

Scoring the Children's Responses.

Four different methods of analysis which had been adapted prior to conducting the study had to be abandoned. The original scales included a concrete-abstract cognitive categorization developed by the researcher, and alternately a grammatical analysis suggested by a writer who analyzed literary use of simile and metaphor (Brooke-Rose, 1958). The Pollio and Pollio (1974) study on children's written figurative language had suggested another means of analysis, as did a psychological study of metaphoric use (Anderson, 1964).

However, after collection and transcription of the data it became evident that none of these original analytic scales was appropriate to the similes and metaphors collected from children's oral language. This led to the researcher's developing categories and definitions based on the varieties and styles of simile and metaphor elicited from the children. All of the examples used to illustrate the categories are from the children's responses. In most cases the stimulus being used is quite clear.

Categories for Analysis.

True Simile. Meets all the requirements of standard definitions of simile.

Partial Simile. Occurs when the focus is omitted, it being implied with the consequence that it is often ambiguous. The indefinite "sort of" is sometimes used.

egs. The ears are sort of like leaves.

The dog's tail is like an icecream cone.

The trees are <u>like</u> a pane of glass.

None of these similes signify how the main and subsidiary subjects are alike; the associated commonplace is omitted.

Incomplete Simile. The simile is left unfinished by omission of the subsidiary subject.

eg. The deer's antlers are as strong as _____

Attenuated Simile. Where the simile is extended or attenuated by the focus becoming a lengthy causal reason why the comparison is appropriate. The tendency is to make the expression literal rather than metaphoric. "Because" usually begins the extended focus.

egs. The giraffe is like the deer, because they are both bigger.

The dog is like a bear, because they both have black fur.

The deer is like a fairy because it's so graceful.

Restricted Simile. Occurs when one stimulus is compared with another, two attributes of the same stimulus are compared, or the stimulus is compared with one of the same type or species.

egs. The deer has a small tail like this dog.

The white on his (dog's) legs is like the white on his skin.

The deer has a fat stomach like a fat person.

Associational Link. An expression which states an association between the main subject and subsidiary subject, using an associational bridging word such as "resemble", "reminds", "appearance", "think", "represents".

egs. His (dog's) mouth reminds me of a teardrop.

It (deer) has antlers that have an appearance to be branches.

I think of his body as a horse's.

The dog represents the night and the day.

True Metaphor. Meets all the requirements of standard definitions of metaphor.

Frozen Metaphor. Frozen metaphors are no longer novel or original, appear quite often in children's oral language, and are used by a number of children, so that their use is quite widespread.

egs. bushy tails

The little boy watched, with his eyes glued on them.

The dog flies out with a bark.

beady eyes

Frozen metaphors include cliches; eg. Dogs are man's best friend.

Pseudometaphor. The subsidiary subject is made the same, or very similar to, the main subject, so that the expression is hardly novel.

eg. The red ribbon is a red string.

Often the focus is made tenuous by the use of "sort of" "kind of", "part of", etc.

eg. Then up in the sky ... is a sort of great big marble.

Sometimes the focus is extended to give a lengthy causal reason why the comparison is appropriate. "Because" often begins the extended focus, as in Attenuated Similes.

egs. The dog is a machine, because it barks.

Antlers are branches, because they both have the same shape and colour.

Like Attenuated Similes, Pseudometaphors show a lack of understanding of metaphoric use and function, because the user makes the associated commonplaces explicit, and the metaphor quality is consequently lost.

Analyzing the Data.

After categorization of the simile and metaphor responses for all tasks, it appeared that the spontaneous oral language tasks (Tasks 1,2,3) should be analyzed apart from the metalinguistic tasks (Tasks 4a,4b,5a, 5b).

A three-way ANOVA was chosen to analyze the frequency of simile and metaphor responses to Tasks 1,2 and 3. This allowed for analysis of each variable grade, task and stimulus, and interaction between the three factors. The three-way ANOVA also allowed for qualitative analysis of simile and metaphor responses, after a program had been run to produce ratios of true simile or metaphor to all simile or metaphor responses.

Two-way ANOVAS were used to analyze the responses to the meta-linguistic tasks. Since task was not a variable, a two-way ANOVA was run for each Task 4a,4b,5a and 5b, with the factors being grade and stimulus, both having three levels.

THE FINDINGS

Quantity of Simile and Metaphor: Tasks 1,2,3.

There was a significant interaction between the factors of task and stimulus. Although stimuli have an effect on the different tasks in increased mean frequency of similes, the effects are of a different nature for each task. Only in conjunction with Task 1 was the stimulus dimension of concrete-abstract consistently effective in increased simile production. With Task 2 the dimension was only effective with the abstract stimulus, and with Task 3 the stimulus dimension had no effect.

The effects of stimuli were most apparent between tasks for the abstract stimulus, which was the most effective stimulant for simile production for all tasks, and which produced four times as many simile responses for Task 1 as for Task 3. It appears that an abstract stimulus in association with a descriptive task is the most successful combination for the production of similes. (See Figure 1). There was no significant difference across grade levels in production of simile.

The effect on simile production was highly significant across the dimension of concrete-abstract stimuli. This tendency to increased

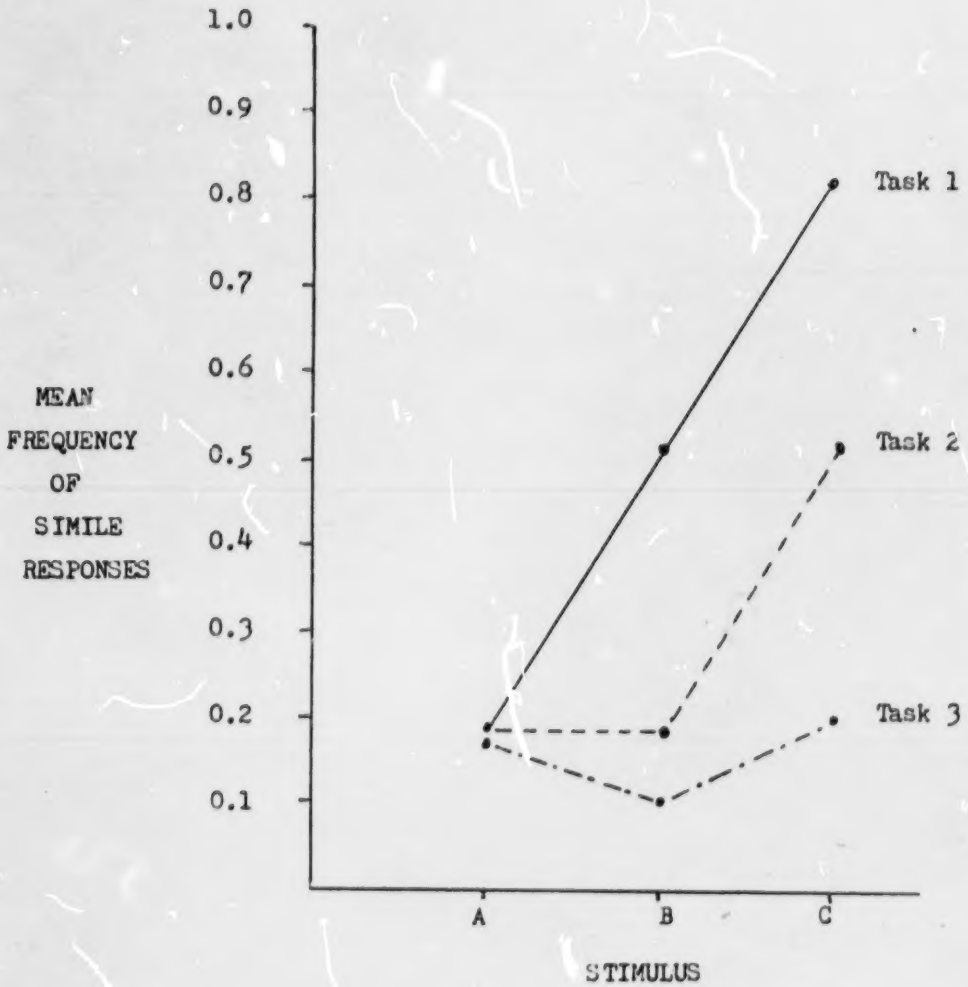

Figure 1

INTERACTION OF TASK AND STIMULUS FOR MEANS OF SIMILE RESPONSES N - 60

simile production across stimuli was expected because of the range in stimuli from concrete to abstract representation.

The significance across stimuli was also significant in the production of metaphor. As this tendency is evident for both simile and metaphor, it can be explained that the less known the stimulus or thing, the more the child might be likely to use analogical thought and language to explain and describe the referent. This predilection for figurative language, and its concomitant, associational thought, might be operative when an unfamiliar and new concept, thing, stimulus or idea, is met.

There were no significant differences across grades or tasks for metaphor production, and there were very few metaphor responses in total.

Quality of Simile and Metaphor: Tasks 1,2,3.

Qualitative analysis of simile and metaphor responses was possible by using a ratio of true similes to all similes (TS/S) produced by each child, and true metaphor to all metaphors (TM/M) produced per child.

Though there was no significant difference across grade levels in quality of simile, there were significant differences across tasks and stimuli. It would appear that as children are more fluent in their oral language there is a tendency to produce many more similes, though relatively fewer similes are true varieties.

There were no significant differences across stimuli for quality of metaphor responses, though as for quality of simile, there was a significant difference across stimuli. (See Table 1). It would seem as though children are using metaphoric thought and language more consciously, or even consciously as compared to unconsciously, for [illegible]ing

and describing the more abstract stimuli as opposed to the concrete stimuli.

Metaphoric thought and language are a more conscious and possibly even deliberate process for abstract referents. Children might therefore be linguistically more exacting and precise in their attempts to describe and discuss an abstract stimulus in associational terms that will likely be appropriate and meaningful to the listener or audience.

TABLE 1

RATIO SIMILE AND RATIO METAPHOR FOR STIMULUS

A,B,C: ALL GRADES, ALL TASKS N - 60

Stimulus	A	B	C
Ratio Simile	.16	.58	.55
Ratio Metaphor	.19	.34	.38

The Stimulus Factor: Tasks 1,2,3.

All statistical analyses showed highly significant differences across stimuli: simile responses, metaphor responses, ratio simile (TS/S), and ratio metaphor (TM/M). It would appear that stimulus is the single most powerful factor in eliciting not only quantity of metaphoric language, but quality also. Furthermore, the abstract

stimulus produced the greatest number of similes and metaphors, while qualitatively the two more abstract stimuli produced approximately equal qualitative levels of simile and metaphor.

The highly significant increase across stimuli support the notion (Richards, 1938; Altick, 1960; Lewis, 1962; Newell et al., 1964) that when the child is faced with an abstract, unfamiliar and unusual stimulus, he/she will employ metaphoric thought to cognize the stimulus, and metaphoric language to explain the stimulus verbally.

The Task Factor: Tasks 1,2,3.

The significant differences across tasks showed greater simile and metaphor production for the first (Description) task, decreasing over the Association task and least for the third, or Composition task.

It would seem as though the children, not faced with a description of an abstract or unfamiliar stimulus or thing, are not consciously aware of the need for associational-metaphoric language, and adopt a casual, personal, conversational style of oral language which, although poetic rather than transactional, to use Britton's (1971) terms, is very sparsely populated with similes and metaphors.

It is likely that metaphoric thought and language are not a regular feature of children's imaginative, fictional, and storytelling mode of oral language, but that it does play a significant role in oral language which is transactional, descriptive, denotative and relatively impersonal. This does not suggest that the capacity for metaphoric thought and language is not present, as the analysis of Tasks 4 and 5 show.

Children's Individual Responses: Tasks 1,2,3.

In terms of numbers of respondents or producers of simile or metaphor, and number of responses or productions per subject, some children are clearly more productive and consistent in their use of simile and/or metaphor across task and particularly across stimuli. Some respondents produced as many as four, five and even six similes per given task for a given stimulus, while most contributed only one.

For metaphor production few respondents gave more than one metaphor for any given task for a given stimulus. Some children failed to give a simile or metaphor at all. In contrast, in Tasks 5a and 5b every child contributed to at least one stimulus, and a large number of respondents produced more than one simile or metaphor for each stimulus.

Some Examples: Tasks 1,2,3.

Typical responses from a wide range of subjects include true similes and other qualitative levels, true metaphor and frozen metaphor. Numbers in parentheses indicate the task (1,2,3) and the letter indicates the stimulus (A,B,C).

Grade 4

He's sort of a coat like licorice. (1A)

and some deer have little pompoms for tails (1B)

raindrop tongue (2A)

Their antlers are fuzzy, they feel like velvet. (2C)

and two coal-black eyes (3B)

Makes you feel like you're in a desert-like place. (3C)

Grade 6

and a mouth that looks like a carrot (1A)

he's got big antlers that look like forks (1B)

His mouth reminds me of a teardrop. (2A, Associational Link)

They look like serpents with their long necks. (2C)

When it comes to our house, it just dances in front of my mom. (3A)

This one looks like a certain one we saw on the way to Jasper. (3B, Restricted Simile)

Grade 8

black and white eyes, sort of like buttons (1A)

The sun is seeping through the trees. (1C)

he resembles something of a Dalmation. (2A)

... the maze of legs that are there ... (2C)

just like two tall fir trees (3C)

the true colours do not come through, and are the colours of fantasy (3C)

Metalinguistic Findings.

Task 4a asked the children to give similes for the three stimuli. The task was purely metalinguistic in that if the child did not know what a simile was, he could not respond. Clearly, the Grade 8 children were able to produce far more similes than the Grade 6 children, while the fourth graders produced none at all. The difference across grades was highly significant. Qualitatively (TS/S) there was a significant difference across grades for simile production, with the Grade 8 pupils giving the most, the fourth graders none.

Task 4b was the same as 4a except that metaphors were being elicited. Although statistically there was no significant difference across grades for quantity or quality of metaphors produced, frequency counts showed that Grade 8 pupils once again produced far more metaphors

than did children in the other grades.

Tasks 5a and 5b were the metalinguistic tasks where children were shown examples of similes and metaphors, and a brief discussion with each child explained what made the phrase or sentence a simile or metaphor. The child was then asked to give similes (5a) or metaphors (5b) for the three stimuli.

Statistical analysis of all simile responses in Task 5a showed no significant difference across grades. Grade 4 children gave 144 simile responses, Grade 6 children 152, and Grade 8 pupils 106. Clearly the Grade 4 and 6 children were much more vocal than the pupils in Grade 8. The Grade 8 pupils met the requirements of the task, but minimally, ie. they tended to give just one simile for each stimulus. Qualitatively there was a very significant difference across grades, with the Grade 8 pupils producing a greater percentage of true similes to all simile responses than the other two grades.

Statistical analysis of Task 5b metaphor responses showed significant differences across grade levels and across stimuli. But once again the Grade 8 pupils gave fewest metaphoric responses, and the Grade 6 children produced almost twice as many responses as the Grade 8 pupils. Qualitatively there was not a great deal of difference between grades. Over all three stimuli the Grade 8 pupils produced 50% true metaphors to all metaphor responses, while for Grades 6 and 4 the figure was 45%.

It was evident that the children in the study found it easier to produce similes than metaphors, possibly because the simile form is more explicit linguistically than is the metaphor form. The tendency

to confuse simile for metaphor, or to prefer the simile form because it is more explicit and less abstract, was further evidenced by the trend of several children in Grade 6, and particularly in Grade 8, to convert similes previously given in Task 4a or 4b to metaphors for Task 5b.

The abstract stimulus C was clearly more useful in eliciting metaphoric language at all three grade levels, and particularly with children in Grades 6 and 8. Some eighth graders, in fact, made that remark in casual conversation at the end of the sessions.

SOME IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS

Type of stimulus proved to be the single most influential factor in both quantitative and qualitative production of similes and metaphors to spontaneous language tasks. Children at all three grade levels preferred the abstract stimulus for metaphoric language production. It seems that abstract, complex (in terms of content) and unfamiliar stimuli are more effective than concrete stimuli in evoking children's metaphoric oral language.

The nature of the task is also significant in production of figurative elements in children's oral responses to spontaneous language tasks. A description task was preferred by children in their use of similes, both in quantity and quality of responses. This suggests that a descriptive task using abstract stimuli would provide a fertile beginning for eliciting children's metaphoric language.

Grade proved not to be a significant factor in children's oral language production to spontaneous language tasks. The metalinguistic tasks showed that older children do have superior ability over younger elementary school children in producing metaphoric language, but don't exercise this ability in their spontaneous oral language. Language control for older children is at the expense of fluency. Language arts programs to develop children's oral metaphoric language might be successfully introduced in the early elementary grades.

The scoring system developed for use with the children's responses might also indicate maturity in the production of simile and metaphor. The analytic scale might well prove a useful base for research into the development of figurative language.

The first step in simile production might be seen as beginning with associational links. Here the main and subsidiary subjects are articulated, but the metaphoric link between the two is not articulated and often cannot be explained by the child.

Restricted similes have the basic syntactic elements of true similes, but the associational thought behind the expression is very restricted. Restricted similes show that the child's associations are tied to the immediate surroundings, so that the novel and creative aspects of metaphoric thought and language are not present.

Attenuated similes show a greater development of metaphoric thought than do restricted similes. Linguistically the producer, however, has failed to understand the simile form, and so reiterates the focus and makes awkwardly explicit the associated parts of comparison. This makes the simile unappealing and unimaginative to the

listener or reader.

Partial similes have all the associational thought and language qualities needed to produce a communicative, meaningful and appropriate simile, with the exception of the focus. This tends to leave the meaning or association within the simile somewhat open to ambiguity, and the true associational link intended by the producer can be lost or distorted. Ambiguity of associational thought is often the intention of metaphoric language when used by writers and poets. But within this study, and in children's spontaneous oral language, such metalinguistic intention is hardly a factor to be considered.

Maturational trends in metaphor responses are less clearly suggested, as relatively few metaphor responses were given. There were virtually no associational links made for the metalinguistic metaphor tasks. Associational links for the spontaneous language tasks could develop into either a simile or metaphor, but given the more difficult process of metaphor, and the attenuated nature of associational link production, it is very likely that associational links would naturally lead into simile rather than metaphor.

Pseudometaphors show lack of understanding of form, either metaphorically (one thing becoming another) or linguistically. Sometimes the abbreviated quality of metaphor is not understood, and the metaphoric statement becomes attenuated by the inclusion of an explicit focus. Often the metaphoric thought process is restricted in depth by the reliance on the immediate surroundings for a subsidiary subject of comparison.

Frozen metaphors do give the child the metaphoric form in a capsule, but whether the child understands the metaphoric background to the frozen metaphor is doubtful. To the user the frozen metaphor is a cliché, another means of describing a thing, a situation, a feeling, a sensation. It is doubtful that the possession of a repertoire of frozen metaphors will ensure that the child will be able to generate his own novel metaphors.

Of much interest is the great number of similes given for metaphors for the metaphor task with examples. This suggests that in metaphoric maturation simile subsumes metaphor, and that children probably prefer to produce similes rather than metaphors. This is likely because the simile form is more explicit, and has a certain "formula" to its production which is easy for children to produce.

Implications.

The use of simile and metaphor fulfills an important role in children's oral language. The younger (Grade 4) pupils in the study used similes and metaphors to describe a concrete stimulus to an unfamiliar audience, while children at all three grade levels used the greatest number of similes and metaphors when describing, talking about, and fictionalizing an abstract stimulus.

Teachers need to be aware of these uses of simile and metaphor by children. It seems that such figurative language is used most frequently when the child has to deal with a descriptive communication situation where the audience is unfamiliar with the referent, or when the child deals with an abstract stimulus.

Language programs which utilize a variety of challenging and unusual communication situations will provide interesting tasks where children can use figurative language. The Description task serves as an example of an unusual communication situation.

Even more stimulating for the production of simile and metaphor is the use of abstract forms of stimuli. Large, colourful paintings, graphics and embedded figures are types of abstract stimuli which elicit associational-metaphorical thought and language. The child strives to describe the stimulus not only for himself, but to communicate his associations, thoughts, ideas and comparisons to others.

The reticence of the eighth grade pupils suggests that oral language as well as written language is an essential part of the junior high school language program. These pupils responded to a demand characteristic in the composition task in that in general they would have preferred to have written a story, thereby being able to revise their story and present a polished, corrected, though hardly spontaneous composition. However, this same guardedness in language production seemed evident also in their oral language compositions.

Unfortunately the great majority of the language tasks given junior high students tend to be of a written nature. Oral language situations seem to bethe domain of formal presentations, mostly based on a written task initially. Classroom instruction may need to focus much more on the expansion of children's oral language at the junior high level. Imagination tasks, composition tasks, associational tasks, memory linking tasks, and figurative tasks, all in the oral mode, are appropriate also at the junior high school level.

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